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November 17, 2015

**Contact:** Christina Villacorte, [213-447-1277](tel:213-447-1277)

**Email:** [cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov](mailto:cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov)

**Contact:** Sharita Moon, [213-974-1300](tel:213-974-1300)

**Email:** [smoon@bos.lacounty.gov](mailto:smoon@bos.lacounty.gov)

### **Board of Supervisors Approves Ordinance Creating Office of Diversion and Reentry**

Reforming Los Angeles County's criminal justice system, the Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance establishing the Office of Diversion and Reentry. Its goal: sending low-risk offenders with serious mental illness and substance abuse disorders into treatment, rather than jail, while preserving public safety.

"Diversion is humane and cost-effective, putting taxpayer dollars to much better use than incarceration does," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who authored, with Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, the motion to create the Office.

Under the [ordinance](#), the Office would be part of the County's Department of Health Services. Its mission is to steer people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, on a path toward mental stability, sobriety and self-sufficiency, so they won't keep cycling in

and out of emergency rooms and jails at tremendous cost to taxpayers.

County Chief Executive Officer Sachi Hamai said the Office “has the potential to create new efficiencies in system delivery and cost avoidance by redirecting persons in need of physical, mental, and public health services, from the criminal justice system to appropriate care and treatment in lieu of incarceration.”

The Office would coordinate with other agencies within the criminal justice system, as well as with community-based organizations, to provide services ranging from housing to mental health and substance abuse treatments, even job training.

In their motion to create the Office, Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Kuehl called for developing “a pipeline of no less than 1,000 permanent supportive housing units over the next five years.” Amendments were added by Supervisor Hilda Solis, who said the Office should also support inmates at risk of becoming homeless after their discharge from jail, and by Supervisor Michael Antonovich, who sought robust community outreach when expanding housing and treatment services.

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